

Thameside Primary School



Attendance Policy

Last reviewed: September 2021

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In this document, 'parent' means:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- any person who has parental responsibility for a child;
- any person who has care of a child, i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

Introduction

For your child to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is of vital importance that you make sure they attend school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their children attend school regularly. Equally, the school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must also be made available to our Local Authority and the Department for Education.

Our school is committed to working with parents and children in the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible, as we know that regular attendance supports optimising your child's attainment.

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any child's absence also disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, children and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this the school will:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular Home-School Bulletin;
- report to you at least termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events;
- run promotional events when parents, children and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like

illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. If this occurs, the school may require evidence of the appointment to be able to authorise the absence.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (County Attendance Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have not been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- day trips and holidays in term time;
- excessive illness without medical evidence.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, we urge you to never cover up their absence or give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. To do so gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

You can support your child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bed times;
- helping with homework;
- having uniform and equipment prepared the night before;
- providing a healthy breakfast;
- reporting any academic or social concerns promptly to the school;
- maintaining open and honest communication with the school;
- being positive about the school (even if your own experience was less than positive);
- encouraging your child to invite school-friends home for play dates.

Persistent Absentee (PA)

A child becomes a Persistent Absentee (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for any reason***. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need the fullest support and co-operation from parents to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA threshold, or is at risk of moving towards that threshold, is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan, which may include (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Allocation of additional support through a Mentor or a Learning Support Assistant;
- putting into place a Parenting Contract;
- use of Circle Time;
- individual incentive programmes;
- participation in group activities around raising attendance.

All PA pupil cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority's County Attendance Team. If your child becomes a PA pupil, we will seek your consent to complete an Early Help Assessment with you and consider convening a 'Team Around the Family'.

** Under current DfE guidance, children with medically certified conditions leading to significant or regular periods of absence would still be categorised as PA if their attendance drops below 90%. However, we will work with the family and with medical professionals, including Oxfordshire Hospital Schools, to ensure that support is put in place to best support their education.*

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and let us know the reason for their absence.

If your child is absent we may:

- Telephone or text you if we have not heard from you;
- invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders, Assistant Headteacher or Headteacher if absences persist;
- refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance moves below 90%.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your current contact numbers at all times. So, please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed.

The County Attendance Team

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any absence problems together. This is nearly always successful.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the matter to the County Attendance Team at the Local Authority, who may issue a Penalty Notice per parent, per child. In certain circumstances, a Penalty Notice may be deemed inappropriate and a summons to court may be issued instead.

The penalty notice is currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice for prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. This can result in a criminal record and a fine of up to £2,500, a Community Order, Parenting Order or ultimately a custodial sentence. The relevant

legislation is the [Education Act 1996 sections 444\(1\) and 444\(1A\)](#).

“If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.”

Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences, may receive summonses to court.

Parents or children may wish to contact the County Attendance Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01865 323513 or you can email them using: attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss important work and time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons and it can be embarrassing for the child, which in turn can encourage absence.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at 8.40am. and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by 8.55am, and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Assistant Headteacher and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Exceptional Leave

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

1. It is widely known that the link between a pupil's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
2. Early poor attendance habits follow through into later years at school, further education and employment.
3. Graduates earn, on average, double that of young people that leave school with no qualifications.
4. All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave.

5. The Head Teacher will meet personally with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance and attainment.
6. Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a pupil's attendance is less than 95%.
7. Exceptional leave should always be refused when the school is aware of any truancy.
8. Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
9. Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of any transfer/transition process.

The County Attendance Team can issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised 'Exceptional Leave'. Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent concerned (whether they live with the child or not). Please note that it will be per parent per child. Payment within 21 days of receipt of notice is £60, and £120 if paid after this period but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days the parent(s) will receive a summons to Oxford Magistrates Court. If unauthorised leave is repeated the County Attendance Team may summons the parent(s) to Court without a Penalty Notice being issued.

School targets, projects and special initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and you and your child have an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Targets for the school and for classes are displayed in the school and we urge you to take time to study them.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Oxfordshire.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Home-School bulletin and we ask for your full support.

The person(s) responsible for attendance matters in our school are as follows:

Miss A Grice - Headteacher
Mrs L Ottaway – Deputy Headteacher
Mrs M Richardson – Home School Link Worker
Mrs A Winder – Home School Link Worker
Mr D Porter - Governor

Policy review and version

This policy will be reviewed regularly and changes may be made at any time. Please ensure you always refer to the latest version, available on our website or from the school office.